لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله

إن الدين عند الله الإسلام

THE REVIEW OF RELIGIONS

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Fath 1354—December 1975

EDITOR

M. G. AHMAD

The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam

The Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, was born in 1835 at Qadian, a village in India. In the eighties of the 19th century, he was called to the office of World Reformer to combat the current of religious philosophies and to explode the Christian theory of redemption based on the fiction of Christ's death on the Cross and to tell the Christians and Muslims to call off their hope for a second visit from Christ as he had been gathered to his forefathers and barred like all mortals from coming back to the world, and that he had come instead as the Promised Messiah.

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The Promised Messiah initiated the Ahmadiyya Movement to revive faith in God, challenging rival churches to a spiritual contest to seek Divine sanction for the religion He favoured, through prayer and appeal to Him for guidance and arbitration in the matter, by means of His signs, to re-establish the glory of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, to expound and disseminate spiritual beauties and moral excellences of the teachings of the Holy Quran, to wean men from war-like tendencies and to educate world opinion in favour of renunciation of war as a means of settling disputes, to infuse hope, faith and courage in the drooping hearts of Muslims and all the depressed races and nations of the world, to warn the exploiters, slave-drivers, and pedlars in sin against the evil consequences of their evil ways, to collect under one banner all the true followers of Islam and lovers of peace and to inculcate among them the spirit of tolerance, good will and selfless fellow-service and a feeling of true brotherhood.

The Promised Messiah passed away in 1908 and was succeeded by his foremost votary and closest companion, Hazrat Hafiz Haji Hakim Maulvi Noor ud-Din as Khalifa-tul Masih I. After his death in 1914, the Promised Son of the Promised Messiah, Hazrat Haji Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, was chosen as Khalifa-tul Masih II. During his 52-year long leadership, the Khalifa-tul Masih II organized a world-girdling chain of mosques and missions. On his death on November 8, 1965, the electoral college named, with one accord, Sahibzada Hafiz Mirza Nasir Ahmad, Promised Messiah's grandson, Khalifa-tul Masih III.

For further information about the Movement, its activities, aims, objectives and literature, enquires may be addressed to the nearest Ahmadiyya Mission or direct to :

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Nazir Islah-o-Irshad,
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It is open to all for discussing problems vital to the religious and spiritual welfare of man, but it does not give any assurance to publish all articles received by the Editor, nor does it accept responsibility for views expressed by contributors.

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FOUNDER OF THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT

A Short Biographical Sketch

By the late Hazrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad M.A.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, was named Ghulam Ahmad at his birth and Mirza was prefixed as a family surname, indicating that he came of the Mongol stock. For brevity's sake he would sometime call himself Ahmad. However he invariably called himself Ahmad when administering the oath of initiation and he has been so named in many of the Divine revelations too.

The exact date of his birth could not be ascertained for quite a long time. He was born during the period of Sikh rule when no birth registers were kept. Besides his birth-date could not be traced as records were not available owing to the straitened conditions the family had to go through at the time. But some records and oral evidence currently found have provided reliable material for the fixation of the date which appears to be 13th of February 1835 A.D. (14th Shawal 1250. A.H.) in the early hours of the Friday morning. Thus the event of his birth seems to coincide with the period of the partial recovery of the family prestige.

He and a sister were born twins. The sister died soon. Pointing out to this incident, the Promised Messiah would often say that God thus removed from him the feminine element and that his manly qualities ripened to a highly excellent stage of maturity. His twin-birth at the same time, fulfilled the prophecy made in some Islamic documents about the birth of the Promised Mahdi (Fususulhikm by Hazrat Muhayyuddin Ibni Arabi).

His Childhood and early education

The Promised Messiah was from his early childhood of a studious mind and given to aloofness and would not mix much with children in play. However he took part in exercise and recreation with moderation and from oral evidence it appears that he learnt swimming while yet a boy and would now and then have a dip in the village pond. He had also learnt riding in early youth and was a very good rider. Now and then he also took to hunting with a catapult. But walking was his favourite exercise which he kept up till the end of his days. He was usully given to brisk walks but would some time take to harder exercise like a turn with clubs to keep up his health. According to a statement made by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II, the Promised Messiah was once seen by him taking this particular exercise during his last days. All this was however for the upkeep of health and in no manner a matter of absorbing interest to him; nor did it entail any waste of time. On the contrary, from his early childhood, the Promised Messiah was inclined towards religious duties and according to some reports, he used to ask his playmates to pray that God may grant him fervent love of prayer. He would also advise them to follow the path of virtue.

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When the Promised Messiah reached the school-going, age, as was the custom among the nobility of the land, his father engaged some teachers to coach him privately. Here it would seem proper to quote his work the 'Kitabul-bariyya':

"This is how I was educated. When I was some six

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or seven years old, a Persian-knowing teacher was engaged for me. He taught me the Holy Quran and a few Persian books. The name of this worthy was Fazle Ilahi. When I was about ten, an Arabic-knowing teacher was employed to coach me. His name was Fazle Ahmad. I believe that since in my education there was an incipient seed-sowing ef God's grace, the first word of the names of these teachers was Fazl (grace). The above mentioned Maulawi was a pious and elderly gentleman and used to teach me with great attention and industry. I learnt from him a few rules of Arabic grammar. Later when I became 18 years of age, I was tutored by another Maulawi, His name was Gul Ali Shah. My father had employed him to teach me in Qadian. From this last mentioned teacher I learnt, grammar, logic and medicine and the current sciences as much as God wished. I also learnt some books of medicine from my father. He was a highly proficient physician. I was so much absorbed in the study of books at that time that in a manner of speaking I was not in this world."

The Promised Messiah was yet in his teens when he was married. According to the eastern custom, marriages at such early age are generally arranged by parents. His case was no exception. Even though the eastern marriages are generally more successful and happy than marriages in the west but there are exceptions everywhere. Perhaps in this particular case, it was the Divine wish that the marriage of His Promised Messiah should be a Divine-arranged affair, so the marriage was not successful. His wife, Hurmat Bibi, was related to him. She gave birth to two sons since the two were temperamentlly ill-suited to one another, the husband was wholly devoted to religion and had totally given up worldly pursuits, the wife was indifferent to religion and engrossed in worldliness, inspite of the Promised Messiah acquitting himsel fully of his household duties as a husband, the marriage did not succeed. After the birth of two sons there

was practically no contact beween husband and wife and eventually the two were separated.

This period of the Promised Messiah's life was devoted to studies. He would spend most of his time in reading books. What engaged most his ettention was the Holy Quran. Those who saw him during that period testify that whenever they came across him they found him occupied in the study of the Holy Book. His perusal of the Quran was not of a desultory and superficial character. On the contrary, it was characterised by keen engrossment and it appeared that he was delving deep in the meaning of the Word of God. According to the statement of a witness who chanced to observe him during the course of a journey from Qadian to Batala, the Promised Messiah opened the Holy Quran as soon as the bullock cart started and kept studying it till the carriage reached Batala without turning over the page. It took a bullock cart five hours to cover the the distance between Qadian and Batala. On his own statement, books had come to occupy such a hig place in his life and he was so much absorbed in study during his youth that his father would worry about his health and would urge him to stop studies lest he should lose his very life in the pursuit of knowledge.

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On seeing him so engrossed in studies, both in the interest of his health and his worldly well-being, his father impressed upon him the need of either taking up a job or engaging himself in the supervision of the family lands. The Promised Messiah did not like the idea but despite persistent remonstrance that he was not suited for the job, he yielded to the pressure of his father and in dutiful obedience to his wishes, started helping him in looking after the lands and under the direction of his father, engaged himself in the task of pursuing the court cases pertaining to family estate that were so frequently springing up at that time. This was a very bitter period of his l fe. He was forced to engage against his wish and natural inclina-

tion in a worldly pursuit which was unfortunately instrumental in vitiating public morals in India.

In 1864 or thereabout the Promised Messiah took up a government job in the District office at Sialkot for a while in obedience to the command of his father. The new environment was not materially different from the atmosphere to which he was so familiar during the pursuit of court cases. There was evidently behind this the Divine purpose that the future Messiah should have first-hand knowledge of the way the world was going. He remained in Sialkot for about four years. During this period, friends and foes alike who came in contact with him were inspired and impressed by the exemplary excellenee of his high character and purity of conduct. One Rev. Butler a British missionary, in spite of serious religious differences held the Promised Messiah in great esteem, he had been so much impressed by his personality, his character and his views that when he was leaving for England, he came to the office of the District Magistrate and being asked the purpose of his visit said that he had come to bid good bye to Mirza Sahib before departure. He accordingly went over straight to the Promised Messiah and after a short talk took his leave. As has been stated before, this period of employment and the preceding period of court cases were bitter episodes in the life of the Promised Messiah as he observes:

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> "I order to recover some ancestral villages, my father had instituted suits in British courts. He put me incharge of these cases and I remained a long time occupied in the pursuit of these affairs. I regret very much that a good deal of my precious time was wasted in these meaningless disputes. Simultaneously my father appointed me to supervise the affairs of the family lands. I was not by nature of that inclination and was therefore often the target of his reprimands. He was exceedingly kind and loving to me but he wished to make me a popular person like all worldly types but my soul re-

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volted against this. Still I believe that solely with a view to earning God's approbation for dutifulness and not for any material benefit, I wholly devoted myself to the service of my father and became engaged in prayer for him. He knew well that I was a sincere well-wisher of my parents. Similarly while under his auspices I passed a few years of my life with great reluctance in the service of the British Government. This experience revealed to me that most of the government employees lead exceedingly undesirable life".

(Kitab al-Barriyya)

At last his father, after his persistent remonstrances, permitted him to resign government service. He returned to Qadian to resume supervision of family estate under the direction of his father. This happened in 1868 or about that time. His mother died at about the same period. Her loving memory tormented him till the end of his days. I well remember how every time he would talk of his mother or whenever some other person would remind him of her, tears would well up in his eyes and his voice would become hoarse with emotion. It gave one the impression that his heart had been suddenly overwhelmed in the whirlpool of emotion and that he was struggling hard to gain control. His mother's name was Chragh Bibi. She came from Aima, a village in Hoshiarpur District. It is said that she was very fond of the Promised Messiah who was known as her favourite child in the family circle.

Return to Qadian

After relinquishing his job at Sialkot, the Promised Messiah returned to Qadian. Here he took over the superintendence of the family property. Most of his time was, however, as usual, devoted to the study of the Holy Quran, commentaries, traditions and books on *tasawwaf*. Generally he would read these books aloud to his father so that he may, in his declining days, turn away from worldly pursuits to the path of religious devotion

and at the same time find a source of sclace in the midst of his grief and sorrow following the loss of many civil suits. His devoted efforts had wholesome results. During his last days, the the Promised Messiah's father grew cold to worldly riches and turned to religious pursuits. This change engendered in him simultaneously the bitter feeling that he had wasted his life in mundane affairs. The Promised Messiah observes in this connection:

"My respected father spent his days in a deep welter of sorrow and grief and restlessness. Seeing his state of affairs gave me a chance to seek a wholesome change in myself, for, the spectacle of the embittered life of my father brought home to me the value of that selfless life which is free from the dirt of worldliness. He was always a prey to grief and sorrow and would often say that if he had devoted to a religious life the time he had wasted in hankering after unholy worldly gain, he would have been a saint and an elect of God. His sense of grievous repentence became highly accentuated during the advancing years of his life. Under the influence of this feeling, he built a mosque, the present congregational mosque, in the centre of the town (Qadian) some six months before his death and in his last will, he expressed the wish to be buried in a corner of the mosque so that there he may hear the name of the Almighty God and that perchance this may serve as the means of his salvation."

(Kitab al-Bariyya).

Some time before the death of his father, the Promised Messiah was told in a dream that in order to make headway in the path of faith and to be worthy of heavenly light, it was necessary to fast. In obedience to this Divine Command, he took to continual fasting for many months. This fasting was in addition to the prescribed one-month course, a recurring annual discipline enjoined by Islam. During this fasting period, the Promised Messiah, gradually reduced the quantum of his daily diet to a few ounces. As he was foretold, during this period, he was the

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recipient of Divine light and met with many former prophets and saints in a revelational state. This lengthy fasting and reduction of daily diet inured his body to suffering and to the hardship of hunger and thirst and as the nethern ties became weak, his soul received a new lustre. He has however disfavoured exercises of hard penance and privation for the common run of mankind as being harmful in their after-effects to weak constitutions exposing them to incidence of dangerous derangement and sickness.

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(Kitab al-Bariyya)

Death of His Father

The Promised Messiah's father died in 1876 and was, according to his last will, buried in the premises of the Mosque he had built during his last days and which is now known as the Masjid-i-Aqsa. The day his father expired, the Promised Messiah was foretold in a Divine revelation of the sad event which, the word of God said would take place in the evening. He writes that this prediction naturally caused him pain at the thought of separation from his father and at the same time for a while made him wonder what would happen to him as all the means of his maintenance were bound up with the life of his parent. This thought had hardly crossed his mind, when the very next moment, he received the Divine word in a majestic tone "Is not Allah sufficient unto His servant?" Since then he was entirely in the care of God and he says that He took such excellent care of him that he could have hardly imagined.

Beginning of Public Life

The Promised Messiah was leading a private and secluded life till 1876 when his father passed away. Slowly he began to have a public life after this event. Or, in other words, the Divine decree began to pull him out of the corner of obscurity to the field of fame in order to initiate reform in the world. The apparent cause of this change was the emergence at that

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time of the Arya Samaj sect among the Hindus under the leadership of Pandit Dayanand Sarsuti, with a new philosophy of religion which infused the Hindu Community with an aggressive spirit against rival religious systems. The Christian missionaries who had been hitherto silent under the impact of the enthusiasm that marked the events of 1857 also began to bestir themselves and started a powerful missionary movement under official auspices. The religion of the Cross was on the ascendent at that period of time looming large like a tumultuous storm over the entire globe. At the same time in India the Brahmoo Samaj Movement was at its height. Its new religious theory garbed in the cloak of peace, love and amity was a sharp sword that cut at the very root of religious faith. Western cultural currents were simultaneously overwhelming the entire world and wherever pleasant-looking influences reached, they sowed the seed of atheism and materialistic beliefs. The virus was rampant everywhere and all peoples were affected by it. The sharp and far-sighted eye of the Promised Messiah saw this four dimensional danger and his lonely but brave soul accepted the challenge of this alarming calamity. His first work entitled the Brahini-i-Ahmadiyya, which is divided in four volumes, was written to meet this four-fold attack. This book deals at length and in an original form, particularly with Divine revelation, its need and its reality. Islam and its truth, Quran and its excellences, power of the Mighty Lord, the infiniteness of Divine knowledge, Creative Power of God and His Dominion. At the same time it embodies his personal claim that he was recipient of Divine communion. The book further contains the revelational Divine word vouchsafed to him. Most of these are prophecies. In short it is work of mounmental value and has been declared by authorities as the masterpiece of Islamic defence. Maulvi Mohammad Hussain Batalvi, the Ahli-Hadis chief who later took the initiative in denouncing the Promised Messiah as a heretic, observed in his review of the book, published in his journal, the *Ishaatus Sunnah* (Vol. 7 No. 6, 1884) :

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"In our opinion this book is without a parallel in the annals of Islam in the contemporary age and in the context of the current conditions.

..."Its author too has proved himself to be so steadfast in the support of the faith, through financial contribution and in terms of offering up his very life and through oral defence and service by means of pen and in terms of mental attitude of devotional preparedness, that there is hardly a comparable instance among past Muslims,"

The Barahin-i-Ahmadiyya has the unique distinction of being the first work of the Promised Massiah. He published a collection of most of his early revelations in this book. This is its other distinction. These revelations relate mostly to his future prosperity. One of these Divine prophecies says "Sovereigns will seek blessings from thy garments." (Barahin-i-Ahmadiyya Vol. IV)

The word of God foretells that a time would come when he would be widely acclimed as the Promised Messiah so much so that kings will enter in his bondage and seek blessings from his garments, placing them on their eyes and their heads and adorning their bodies with them. This revelation was vouchasafed to him when he was quite unknown and had not laid claims to the office of Mujaddid (Reformer) and Mamur (Commissioned with Divine assignment). None knew him then. But coming generations would witness how God fulfills His own word. This prophecy also carries the implication that when Kings would rise among Ahmadis or join the ranks of the Movement the used garments of the Promised Messiah, which are by their very nature not very lasting things, will yet be extant. The Promised Messiah futher says that in a revelational state he saw those kings and that they were seven in number and mounted on horses. He did not however explain the meaning of the number of seven nor of their being on horses. But in my opinion the number seven stands either for a large figure or points to perfection. It is also possible that the number points to seven

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climes, as is the term figuratively used to indicate seven regions or seven region empires. Mounting horse-back means that the kings under reference would not be nominal sovereigns but potentates holding the reins of power personally (riding a horse in a dream means being a ruler. God knows best.) There are many other revelations listed in the Barahin-i-Ahmadiyya. Of these many have been fulfilled and many more await fulfilment.

First Divine Command of Office

The four volumes of the Barahin-i-Ahmadiyya had not yet been completed (1880 to 1884) when he received his historical revelation in 1882 by virtue of which he was elevated to the high office of Divine Commissioner. The word of God was: "O Ahmad Allah has blessed thee; the attack thou made on behalf of faith was not made by thee; it was made by God infact. God has granted thee the knowledge of the Quran so that thou may alert the people whose forefathers were not alerted and so that the way of the transgressors becomes manifest. Tell menfolk I have been commanded by God and I am the first to believe". (Brahin-i-Ahmadiyya Vol. III)

The above was not the first Divine message that he received. As has been stated earlier, word of God had started coming to him during the life-time of his revered father. But this was the first revelation that referred to his assignment and which ushered in a new period of his life, But since he had not been commanded for some time to call men to obey him, he kept working in a general way for Islam and did not found a new community or an organization. The only thing he did about it was that he announced his Divine assignment through a poster to all four corners of India and sent its English version abroad to all monarchs, ministers and religious leaders and invited the followers of all faiths to seek from him through personal contact or correspondence answers to any doubts or questions that arose in their minds about the truth of Islam

and of the Holy Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be on him) or about revelation or the existence of God, or about the excellence of the Holy Quran. His claim that he was the reformer of the age was related to the promise held forth in Islam that God will raise a redeemer at the end or begining of every century who would serve as His Instrument in regenerating faith. Reformers had accordingly made their appearance in the preceeding centuries and that he was the Reformer for the current century raised to serve Islam and granted the requisite knowledge and power to meet the challenge of the evil age.

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Some other Revelations

Following the revelation pertaining to his assignment, he had an expanding series of Divine communication and since these were coming in while he was compiling the Brahin i-Ahmadiyya he entered them in the book. Thus there was in hand a store house of evidence that could dispose of effectively any canting opposition. These revelations mostly bespoke of his future success though they were received by him at a time when his claim was in an incipient stage and no community organization had been planned so far and very few people were acquainted with him. Three typical revelations will serve as representative samples :

(Vide Notice attached to Barahin-i-Ahmadiyya Vol. IV, 1884).

1. "People will come to thee from far and material aid will reach thee from distant places so much so that the way to Qadian will be worn into pits by this constant traffic of men and goods and material aid."

(Brahin-i-Ahmadiyya Vol. IV 1884 A.D.)

The above prophetic Divine word was revealed to the Promised Messiah at a time when Qudian had no visitors and this vlilage lay tucked away in obscurity far from public notice. But people saw this revelation came true during the life of the

Promised Messiah and it is still in the continual process of implementation and none can foretell what marvels of Divine glory will its ultimate shape disclose.

2. The second representative revelation runs thus :

> "The time is at hand when thy enemies will assault thee to take thy life but I will save thee from all these attacks and cause thee to die a natural death in fulness of thy time and thy death will be marked with honour and glory and will be an ascension. After that thy soul will be elevated towards Me and I will make thy followers dominant over thy opponents till the Day of Resurrection and they will never be discomfited in their battles against thy opponents." (Barahin-i-Ahmadiyya Vol. IV).

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The foregoing revelation is evidently a formidable prophecy by itself and infact it embodies many hidden prophecies which extend to the end of the world and it carries for the Movement a glad tidings of unparalled grandeur. Though a part of the prophecy has been fulfilled and for the seer its other part is also in the process of incipient implementation, its real glory will however manifest itself in the days to come and will present a wondrous spectacle for those who will be there to witness.

3. The third revelation which finds mention in the Brahin-i-Ahmadiyya (Vol, IV) is as follows :

> "A warner came to the world but the world did not accept him. God will however grant him acceptance and manifest his truth by means of Mighty attacks".

This divine message calls for no comment. Its potential and its prophetic content are self evident. Ahmadiyya Movement is yet in its initial stages but Divine attacks have given a through shaking to the world and these introductory attacks are telling evidence of the fact that God the All-powerful Lord of Majesty and Honour will not relent until the truth of His

Messenger has been firmly established.

The Barahin-i-Ahmadiyya contains many other prophetic revelations which cannot be dealt with in this short treatise for want of space.

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Marriage and Promised Progeny

After he had completed the fourth volume of the Barahin-i-Ahmadiyya and had annouced his Divine commission, the Promised Messiah married in the end of the year 1884, under Divine guidance through a revelation, a lady of a respectable Sayyad family of Delhi. This second marriage of Promised Messiah proved a great success and was a source of happy bliss as against his first marriage. His domestic life presented a spectacle of model domestic blissfulness. His new wife Nusrat Jahan Begum of revered memory, known in her life-time as the mother of the faithful was the daughter of Hazrat Mir Nasir Nawab, a grandson of Hazrat Mir Khwaja Dard, a highly venerated saint of Delhi renowned and respected for his piety and frankness. The Promised Messiah was blessed through this marriage with a number of children till almost the end of his earthly life. He says that the birth of all his children from his Sayyad wife had been foretold and that before the birth of each of them he had been vouchsafed Divine revelation and in respect of one son in particular, he was foretold that he will attain to a high position and shall be the means of the manifestation of God's glory and that nations will receive grace through him. Of his surviving children from the Sayyada Nusrat Jahan Begum Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad is the eldest. He was born in 1889 and was elected Khalifa of the Promised Messiah in 1914 and is the present head of the Ahmadiyya Community.*

It will not be out of place to mention here that the

*Note : This article was written during the life time of Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, the second Khalifa of the Promised Messiah. Who died in 1965. The present Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement is Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad the eldest son of the second Khalifa and a grandson of the Promised Messiah.

Promised Messiah's treatment of his family and of his children was extraordinarily affectionate and pleasingly over-indulgent. I find no adequate words to describe it fully except that kindliness and love and counsel had combind to evolve a domestic atmosphere which represented a high plane of heavenly felicity. I have seen the domestic lives of thousands of households and read a lot about many a home but I can say with certainty that I saw none better as a father and none better as a husband in my time. His kindliness was not confined to his wife and children. It extended in a copious measure to his friends, to his neighbours, to his kith and kin, to the strangers and even to his enemies who inspite of religious hostility had complete faith in his truthfulness, his veracity and his fidelity.

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Falling of Stars

In the end of 1885, God manifested a stirring sign support of the Promised Messiah. The night between November 27 and 28 presented an extraordinary spectacle of falling stars. They were falling in such number that it looked like a rain of stars. It represented in figuritive language an ultimatum of the impending war of Divine forces on Satanic elemets and heavenly powers seemed to be in an extraordinary ferment. In this connection, the Promised Messiah observes :

> "On the night of November 28, 1885, the night preceding 28th No ember, there was such a spectacle of falling stars in the heavens as I have never seen a like of in my life and in the firmament thousands of flames were being thrown in every direction. There is nothing comparable to it in the world to enable a descriptin....This falling of the stars was on snch an extensive scale that it found print in the public press of Europe and America and Asia. This falling of the stars had started early in the evening which I enjoyed seeing because of revelational fore-knowledge....For it was

inspired in my mind that this was a sign for me".

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(Aina Kamalat-i-Islam)

It has been already stated that this falling of stars was a hint that there was a move afoot in the high heavens to set about reformation in the earth and that Divine forces were about to make an assault on satanic elements. According to traditions a similar spectacle (Zurqani Vol. I p. 122-123) was observed in the firmament at the time of the birth of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). At times some sign other than falling stars is evidenced in the heavenly bodies, as, at the time of the birth of Jesus, a new star was seen on observing which some magians set forth in search of the Messiah (Matthew Ch. 2). Jesus Christ coincidentally laid down falling of stars as a sign of his second coming. He says:

> "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light. And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." (Mark Ch. 13 : 24-26)t

The reference in the above-noted words of Jesus Christ to fading of the sun and of the moon means their eclipse which was another sign for the appearance of the Promised Messiah and which came into effect in 1894, as we shall revert to it later, on the dates specified in Islamic books. The clouds mentioned in the above words of New Testament in the context of Messiah's descent convey the meaning that though in reality the advent of the Promised Messiah will be with power and glory and heavenly forces will be in motion with majestic force and in splendour, but in the incipient stage in the eyes of the world, his second coming would apparently look like a descent in a cloudy weather and dim light but that later the clouds would be dispersed and the light will grow into its full refulgence.

Retirement into Seclusion

The Promised Messiah repaired to Hoshiarpur in the beginning of 1886 under Divine guidance. This town is situated some forty miles east of Qadian and is the headquarters of a District of the Punjab. Here he remained in seclusion for forty days engaged in worship of God and in prayer alone in a house which was on the outskirts of the town. He used to stay in the upper storey of the house and his three companions who attended on him lived on the ground floor. He had forbidden to be spoken to and would himself speak very rarely devoting most of his time to prayer and worship. This retirement resembled in many respects the Islamic custom of Itikaf (retirement to a mosque).

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During this period a wealth of heavenly lights was vouchsafed to him. He received revelations also about the Promised Son during these days. He was foretold of the grant of a son who would be a sign of mercy from God and would be instrumental in the propagation of faith. The revelation runs thus :

> "He will have splendour and magnificence and wealth. He will come to the world and through his messianic breath and by means of the blessings of the spirit of Truth cure many of their maladies. He is the Word of God, for, the mercy and jealousy of God sent him with the writ of Honour. He will be exceedingly intelligent and sagacious and compassionate of heart and will be filled with knowledge of the temporal as well as the spiritual and will make three into four. It is a Monday, the Blessed Monday. The heart-comforting, honoured son, favourite of fortune ; the mainfestor of the First and of the Last, the Reflector of Truth and of Triumph as if verily Allah had in person descended from the heavens. His appearance will be highly blissful and the means of the manifestitation of the majesty of God. Light is coming—light. God annointed him with the perfume of

His pleasure. We will infuse in him Our spirit. The protection of God will be with him. He will flourish fast and will be the means of the deliverence of captives. He will be known to the ends of the world and nations will receive blessings from him. Then he will be raised to the heavens towards the pinnacle-point of his soul and this affair has been decreed".

(Poster dated February 20, 1886)

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After completing the 40-days seclusion period the Promised Messiah stayed in Hoshiarpur for another twenty days during which time he was engaged in a long argument on Islam and theories of Arya Samaj with an enthusiastic Arya Samajist, Master Murli Dhar. The Promised Messiah achieved remarkable success in the encounter. Soon after this debate, the Promised Messiah published a book entitled "Surma-i Cashmai Arya". It covered the proceedings of the debate and embodied convincing arguments in support of Islam and in repudiation of the Arya Samajist religion. He issued a challenge to the Arya Samajists to write a rejoinder disproving his arguments, promising to pay the successful rival a handsome reward. None dared pick up the gauntlet. This book was published in the end of 1886 and is one of the best works of Ahmadiyya literature. Besides a complete exposure of the Samajist theory of self-existence of soul with blasting arguments, the book deals in an original manner with the philosophy of miracles and devotes a fine article on the "Shaqqul Qamar" (breaching of the Moon) sign shown by the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

Birth and Death of Bashir I

A boy was born in the house of the Promised Messiah in the end of the year 1887. He was named Bashir Ahmad. Asked by the people if he was the child whose birth had been foretold, the Promised Messiah stated that he had no hint from heavens about the

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matter and that under the circumstances the boy might be the Promised Son and if he were not, the Promised Son would be born later. When, however, the boy died in the end of 1888, as God had willed, in spite of the clear statement, people made an uproar declaring that the prophecy had not come true and that the boy whose birth had been foretold with so much emphasis had passed away in his infancy. He cleared the position again by means of a handbill stating that he never claimed that the deceased baby was the promised child and that he had not been imparted knowledge from God in that behalf. He again reiterated his claim in a forceful manner that the eminent son he had been promisd would be born in God's good time, without fail, adding that the earth and the heaven may pass but that the word of God would neverthless come true. (Ishtihar December 1, 1888).

The Movement is Founded

As already stated, the Promised Messiah received the first revelation about his Divine assignment in March 1882 following which he announced his claim to the office of Reformer through posters and other means to the entire world, but he did not invite people to enter the *baiat* pact with him as he had not been commanded to do so. Nevertheles; he continued to serve Islam as usual. In the end of 1888, he received the Divine command to call peopie to make with him a solemn covenant (of faithful obedience to him in the spiritual regeneration of Islam) and make proclamation to that effect. Under Divine command he called people to pledge *baiat* to him. On the first day when *baiat* pledge was taken on March 1889 at Ludhiana forty persons entered the the covenant with him pledging repentance of sin and whole-hearted obedience in virtue, each pledging to keep faith before the world. The early batches of followers consisted of members who had already imbibed his influence and believed in his righteousness. Of these Hazrat Maulvi Noorud Din was an outstanding figure, as a man of great learning and a highly efficient physician, then in the employment of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir as royal Physician He was a man of profound erudi-

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tion, had deep knowledge of the Quran and a great aptitude for the exegesis of the Holy Book, and had vast knowledge of the literature of Islam and contemporary religions. He was the first to enter the pact of *baiat* on the first day. Hazrat Maulvi Nooruddin had the further distinction of being his successor as the first Khalifa on the death of the Promised Messiah (peace and salutations on him) in 1908.

He hailed from Bhera, a town in District Shahpur (Punjab),

At this early stage of initiation, the Promised Messiah's (peace be on him) only claim was that he was a reformer—that God had appointed him to reform and serve the faith of Islam appointing him to the office, at the beginning of the 14th century of the Islamic era. He had on other claim ; neither to be the Messiah, nor the Mahdi, nor a Prophet nor a Messenger and nor the Promised of all Faiths. Therefore he encounterd no opposition from Muslims at that time, in fact he was regarded a great general of Islam and a holy man of ucommon piety and great virtue and one imbued with a moving enthusiasm for the service of Islam. He was thus looked upon as a great prop of faith and its powerful defender. Non-Muslims likewise regarded him as a peerless general of Islam and were deeply over-awed by his forceful writings. But this position did not last long as we shall presently see.

Claim to the Office of Promised Messiah

The years 1890 and 1891 were a period of profound import for the Promised Messiah. During this period God revealed to him the great truth which completely changed the public attitude towards him and there was such a sweeping storm of opposition to him as is witnessed only during the time of the Prophets. The whole story is this that in a revelation during the end of 1890, Allah informed him that Jesus Christ who is believed both by Christians and Muslims to be alive in heaven and whose advent both expect in the later days, is in reality

dead and that there is no truth in fact in the story of his bodily ascension nor any truth in the belief that he is still alive and further that the promise about his second coming was to find implementation through a like of him. It was further revealed that he in person was the like of Jesus. One of the revelation he received in this context was :

"Messiah son of Mary, Prophet of Allah, is deed. It is thou, who has appeared in his spirit, according to the promise. And the promise of God is ever fulfilled."

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(Tazkara pp. 186, 187)

Through posters and pamphlets the Promised Messiah proclaimed this claim in 1891 as he received this grand revelation. (Vide Fath-i-Islam and Tauzihul Maram and poster dated March 26, 1891). There was a terrible upheavel among Muslims and Christians and the flames of opposition raged high throughout the country in the wake of this announcement. This opposition owed its origin to the fact that both Muslims and Christians had long held the belief that Jesus of Nazareth who was born some 1900 years back in Palestine was alive in heavens and would come a second time during the latter days when mischief and misbelief would be rampant and that the kingdom of God would be established through him again. Both shared this view though they differed in details of their common belief. Muslims held that Jesus, the Prophet of Allah did not die but was saved from death on the cross and was taken alive to heavens and would come down to earth once more to establish the domination of Islam over other faiths and this domination would be of a retributive and smashing character and those nations who refused to owe allegiance to Islam would be wiped out. The Christians believed that their Lord Jesus died on the Cross but his death was a temporary phase and a voluntary act on the part of the Messiah, undergone to carry the sins of mankind and that he was restored to life after that and was taken to heavens alive and that he would come down to the earth again to establish world-wide dominion of Christianity and that his second

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coming would be of greater glory and power than his first appearance. In other words both the peoples were expecting the second advent of Jesus in the light of their respective beliefs and looked upon him as their Saviour and had formed imaginary pictures in their minds of his descent in glory.

When the Promised Messiah declared that Jesus was dead like all other mortals and had not ascended the heavens and that the promise relating to his second advent had been fulfilled through his own person as he had been raised in the spirit of Jesus and endowed with his spiritual powers both Muslims and Christians were naturally thunder-struck and seeing their long-cherished dreams vanishing in smoke, raised a havoc, each in his own way. This opposition raged with much greater ferocity among the Muslims, for, he had made the claim to the office of the Promised Messiah in Islam and also because Muslims were his first audience. The Muslim Ulema, therefore, denoudced him as an innovator, a heretic and outside the pale of Islam, naming him anti-Christ and an enemy of the faith. A terrible storm af opposition soon raged from one end of the land to the other.

The Promised Messiah (peace be on him) had a handful of followers with him at the time. But the storm of opposition soon raged from one end of the land to the other.

The Promised Messiah (peace be on him) had a handful of followers with him at the time. But the storm of opposition failed to terrify him. In fact he took it as a sign of his truthfulness, being wholly in accord with the Divine precedent pertaining to all Divine Dispensations. In a comprehensive and well-reasoned book "Izale-i-Auham", he advanced solid arguments in support of his claim proving at the same time, in the light of the Quran, Ahadis, and Christian scriptures that Jesus had in fact died and was never taken to the heavens and that the promise about the appearance of the Messiah in the latter days was actually to be implemented through a like of Jesus exactly in the same way as had the promise about the second advent of Elijah been fulfilled through the person of John the Baptist

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during the days of Jesus Christ. He established the point that quite many verses of the Holy Quran testify to the death of Jesus and that not a single verse of the Holy Book favours the idea that he was taken alive to the heavens and that the Muslims borrowed this belief from Christians and were deceived into holding the view on account of their misconception of certain allegorical expressions and that there was not the slightest trace of this erroneous belief to be found during the life-time of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessiugs of Allah be on him) nor during the subsequent days of his holy Companions.

He further proved that the signs foretold in Islam about the time of the scond advent of the Messiah had appeared; the decline of Muslims, ascendency of the Cross, introduction of steam locomotive and printing press were all there and that this was precisely the age appointed eternally for the second coming of Messiah. At the some time he brought home the point that the coming of the Messiah in glory did not carry the implication that he would come to wield the sword and that, on the contrary, the term stood for his spiritual attributes and was meant as an accent on the comparative splendour that shall attend his second coming as against his first appearance and only assured greater achievement and overwhelming success. In respect of Dajjal, the anti-Christ, foretold to appear at the time of the Messiah, the Promised Meseiah observed that the expression did not stand for any particular individual but that in fact it stood for a lost group of people which would be instrumental in creating world-wide mischief by means of its wicked forces and that the description fitted the forces of Christianity which were engaged, in utter disregard of the teachings of of Jesus, in diffusing materialism and atheism in the world. (Vide Izala-i-Auham)

(To be continued)

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"The Sun of Truth shall rise from the West"

In 1897, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad the Promised Messiah declared :

"The Unity of Allah will triumph in the end ; all other deities will perish ; false gods will be stripped of their alleged divinity ; the period of Mary being worshipped as Mother of God will come to an end, and the doctrine of divinity of her son too will die. God Almighty says (in the Quran) : If I so will, Mary and her son Jesus and her son Jesus and all who inhabit the earth shall perish. Now, He has willed that the false divinity of both of them should suffer death. The two divinities, therefore, must die. No one can save them. With them shall die all those propensities which prompted obedience to false gods. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. The days are near when the sun of truth shall rise in the West and Europe shall come to know the true God. Thereafter the door of repentance shall close. For, those who desired to enter will have entered with eagerness. Only those will remain without whose hearts are sealed by nature, who love not light but darkness. All faith shall perish except Islam and all weapons shall break except the heavenly weapon of Islam which shall neither break nor be blunted until it smashes the forces of darkness into bits. The time is close at hand when the pure Unity of God that even dwellers of deserts who are ignorant of all faiths, feel in their hearts, will spread throughout. On that day no false redemption or false god shall survive. One blow of the divine hand will nullify all machinations of disbelief, but not with the sword or the gun but by means of enlightening a number of souls with divine light and by imbuing pious hearts with divine effulgence. Only then will you understand what I say".

(Tabligh-i-Risalat ; Vol. vi pp. 8, 9).

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Since these prophetic utterances were made the world of religion has been completely transformed. The Christian Europe is undergoing a great change. It no longer believes in the Divinity of Jesus ; the Christians themselves are beginning to realize the unreasonableness of their beliefs. In the following pages we are reproducing two articles by Mr. John Hick, H. G. Wood Professor of Theology at the University of Birmingham. These articles, published in the Times of London of October 4 and 11, 1975, bear a testimony to the truth of prophetic words uttered by the Promised Messiah about Seventy-eight years ago.

The Christian Church and people of other religions

Two hundredred years ago Fielding's Parson Thwackum could say, "When I mention religion. I mean the Christian religion ; and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion ; and not only the Protestant religion, but the Church of England". Today however Christians of different denominations are accustomed to co-operate fully with one another ; and they have also become aware that large though the number of Christions, in the world is, an even larger number of people are living by religious faiths other than Christinity.

"We have visible reminders of this fact in many of our cities now that Hindu and Sikh temples and Muslim mosques have been added to the Jewish synagogues which have long been there. The communities which worship in these places pose new, and to some Christians alarming, questions. For instance, should redundant church building be sold to Muslim, Sikh and Hindu congregations who are seeking a place in which to worship ?

Behind such practical, and sometimes pressing issues there lies the fundamental theological question of the Christian attitude to other world religions. This attitude has developed over the centuries and is today in flux, an earlier consensus having crumbled and a new one having not yet been formed. The older consensus was expressed in the traditional Roman Catholic doctrine, "Outside the Church there is no salvation", and its

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Protestant missionary equivalent, "Outside Christianity there is no salvation." If was in this spirit that the Chicago Congress on World Mission in 1960 declared that "In the years since the war more than one billion souls have passed into eternity and more than half of these went to the torment of hell fire without even hearing of Jesus Christ, who He was or why He died on the cross of Calvary". But in recent decades there has been a wide spread move away from this kind of position.

Vatican II, in its Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, said: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men." And Protestant missionary leaders have been saying rather similar things, as for example in this statement by Canon Max Warren former General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society: "when we approch the man of another faith than our own it will be in a spirit of expectancy to find how God has been speaking to him and what new understandings of the grace and love of God we may ourselves discover in this encounter."

Although the mainline churches have thus abandoned the view of the other world religions as lying outside the sphere of God's grace, they have not yet fully assimilated the implications of their own new attitudes. Such a development takes time; and it can be a good method of theological progress for churchmen first to respond with their hearts to the human realities around them, and then gradually to formulate the theological insight implicit in their practical attitudes. The human reality which we in the West have only comparatively recently perceived is that the other world religions have produced equally great saints, mystics and thinkers, and have been sources of spiritual and moral life and orderly frameworks of social existence for many millions of men and women through many centuries.

In this period of assimilation and reformulation various interim devices have been created to help us detach ourselves from the old dogma. These are theological fictions, such as that devout non-Christians are to be counted as "anonymous" Christians, or as members of the invisible or the latent Church, or as possessing implicit faith and as having received "baptism by desire". But although such theories are helpful as transitional aids, they cannot permanently satisfy the candid mind. For either salvation is through Christ alone, and all men must ultimately become his disciples if they are to be saved, or men and women have been and are being saved outside Christianity and within the other great world religions. We cannot for long talk in both ways at once.

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But to insist that only Christians can be "children of God" and "heirs of eternal life" would be manifestly unacceptable. It would imply that God has failed to provide for the salvation of the greater part of mankind. For most of the great multitude of human beings who have been born until now, during the hundred thousand or so years over which it is possible to speak of man, have lived either before Jesus or beyond the sphere of his influence. We therefore cannot believe *both* that God loves all mankind in a universal divine love *and* that He has provided, in the comparatively narrow thread of Judaic-Christian history, only a single path to salvation—and one which has not been accessible to most of His human children.

We must then, instead, believe that the divine Lagos has been at work in the revelatory events which lie at the basis of all the great world religions, and that these religions are different human responses, formed within different cultural circumstances, to the same ultimate divine reality.

But was not Christ uniquely God incarnate, and did he not say, "No man cometh to the Father, but by me"? Must he not then be the sole mediator between Gad and man? I shall take up this central question in a second article next

Saturday. (The Times, October 4, 1975)

Changing views of the uniqueness of Christ

If all the major world religions are seen as ways of salvation, leading men ultimately to the same divine reality, what becomes of the uniqueness of Christ? If no one can come to God except by Christ how can men also come through Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism...? These questions go to the heart of most significant debate now taking place in Christian theology.

It was long taken for granted that Jesus claimed to be God incarnate, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity miraculously born on earth to live a human life and that the traditional designation of him as God the Son incarnate accordingly derives from his own teaching. However in the light of present-day biblical studies it now seems extremely unlikely that Jesus thought of himself in any such terms.

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The great christological sayings on which the tarditional doctrine is most centrally based—"I and the Father are one", "He who has seen me has seen the Father", "I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me"—come from the Fourth Gospel; and it is no secret today that this is a late document which differs from the three earlier gospels in being less of an historical record and more of a meditation about Christ from a theological standpoint achieved two or three generations after his death. Further, the author uses the technique of putting into Jesus's mouth long discourses which contrast strikingly with the parables and sayings of the earlier gospels. Thus a number of considerations have led most New Testament scholars today to doubt whether the historical Jesus uttered the speeches attributed to him in St John's Gospel.

How then did the idea that Jesus was the Son of God enter the developing Christian tradition? It probably came with the title of messiah, the true king of Israel, who was to be God's human agent in inaugurating His reign on earth. It is

not clear that Jesus himself adopted this title, but nevertheless it seems to have been the principal category by means of which the early church understood his significance. And as messiah Jesus was believed to be of the royal house of David.

In this role he would inherit the metaphorical title "son of God", for in Israel (as elsewhere in the ancient near east) the king became "son of God" in being consecrated to his holy office. Accordingly the words attributed to the heavenly voice at Jesus's baptism are the coronation formula of Psalm ii, 7. As messiah Jesus was thus hailed as royal son of God, and later this poetic image hardened into prose as the metaphysical dogma that he was the pre-existent divine Son incarnate, of one substance with the Father, and thus the one and only mediator between God and man.

Who then was Jesus and what does he mean to us today? He was a man who was intensely conscious of God, living continuously in God's presence and finding his meat and drink in the doing of God's work on earth. His life was so transparent to the divine will that he could speak about the heavenly Father with authority, could proclaim His forgiveness, and could declare His claim upon men; and the power of life flowed through his hands in healing. He was so vividly aware of God that in his presence men and women were drawn by spiritual contagion into the conscious presence of God. In this way he was a saviour to many, and continues to be so today through the living memory of him passed down to us in the New Testament and within the Christian community.

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All this is expressed by the traditional mythological language in which we are accustomed to speak of Jesus as Son of God, God the Son, God incarnate. It was natural that in the past Christians, reading their Bible literally, should at the same tims understand literally the poetry of their devotion to Jesus. Today however we need to remember again the original meaning of the son of God title if we are not to be led to treat it as a literal

premise from which to draw the literal conclusion that there can be salvation only through Jesus, and therefore that God has discarded the large majority of His human creatures.

But what of the Christian mission to the world? Has this been a mistake? No doubt much of the nineteenth-century missionary movement was a mistake, for its religious intention was nullified by the fact that it was carried on the back of the political and commercial imperialism of the Christian West. But the basic policy of making the Church's memory of Jesus available to the world is not mistaken. For every great revelatory event is for all men and ought to be made universally known. Thus what is revealed of God through Jesus can help to deepen and purify other streams of faith.

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We see an ideal example of the influence of Jesus outside Christianity in the life of the Mahatma Gandhi. He was deeply affected by Jesus's teaching and example, so that E. Stanley Jones described him as "more christianised than most Christians". Gandhi remained a Hindu, but his Hindu faith was enriched by his reading of the New Testament. And we as Christians can likewise gain from the revelations given to men in other traditions. Thus we may hope in the future for a relationship between the world religions comparable with that which has been developing between the different Christian denominations. Indeed one of Christianity's gifts to mankind may be the way in which its ecumenical movement points towards a larger world ecumenism.

(The Times, October 11, 1975)

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